

## **Connecticut State Consulting Committee For Agriculture Science and Technology Education**

To the Connecticut Legislation: Appropriations Committee

February 22, 2012

George Wheeler, Chair of the Connecticut Agriculture Science and Technology Education Consulting Committee

I would like to address the report: "Proven Success, Untapped Potential; How Current Policies Hinder Connecticut's Regional Agriscience High Schools from Meeting the Needs of a Vigorous Agricultural Economy."

Most of you know that there are 19 agriscience programs located throughout the state in our comprehensive high schools. All students get industry standard programs, leadership training and supervised work experiences prior to graduation. And then, 53% go on to college, others go directly into agriculture related work.

Every student in our state has the right to apply for ag science programs. We serve 3200 of these interested, motivated kids with great results.

Did you know that over 1100 interested students are denied each year?

Do you know that sending towns are limiting the number of students that they will send to the regional ag centers? A town that once sent over 20 students to a regional ag center now only sends no more than 3.

Do you know that host schools limit the number of students that they will take? Why?

We have the facilities, the state regulations, the industry needs and the interested students.

What we don't have is adequate funding that other choice schools have as an incentive.

The sending towns must pay \$7992, plus transportation, to have a student attend a regional agriscience center. It costs the same sending town \$0 to send a student to a technical school. It is no wonder that superintendents of schools would rather send students to the technical schools.

The host schools accept these students and receive the \$7,992 from sending schools, plus \$1,417 from the State of Connecticut. That totals \$9,409, when, as you know, the average cost per student for that host school is closer to \$14,000. These figures do not set well with local taxpayers.

The current governor's budget shows an increase of funding for all choice school programs, except the agriscience programs.

For some reason the politicians think that there should be more money spent to train students to be hairdressers, cooks, electricians, plumbers, artists, mechanics; ..... Than to train students to produce

your food, do your landscaping, to be florists, to be an animal technician, or a forester, or a small equipment dealer.

I hope you realize that this is not right! At a time of equal rights, we need equal funding for the entire choice school program in Connecticut. We have been fighting for years for more funding, with little results. Now is the time. Think about agriculture students when you sit down to three meals a day, think about agriculture students when you go to the lumberyard for wood, and think about agriculture students when you breathe in fresh air in our open spaces in this great state of Connecticut. Agriculture Science and Technology programs are a proven success and we have untapped potential. We need your help to reach that potential.

Eleven million dollars phased in for the next two years would mean using the ag centers to their maximum and serving thousands more students.